



**DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY
AND VETERANS AFFAIRS**

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Dakota Regional Office Update - July 31st was Darryl Brady's last day in his temporary assignment as Acting Director of the Dakotas Regional Office. He returns to Houston as Assistant Director of the Houston Regional Office. Donna Meyer-Hickel has been delegated Acting Director of the Dakotas Regional Office effective August 1.

Reminder – Veterans Service Officers, don't forget to submit your nominations for the numerous awards recognizing leaders within our veteran network. The criteria and nomination forms were forwarded to you in July. Honorees will be recognized during the "Steak Fry" at the Annual Veterans Benefits School. All nomination forms should be forwarded to the South Dakota Department of Military and Veterans Affairs office by August 14. Harry S. Truman once said, "I studied the lives of great men and famous women, and I found that the men and women who got to the top were those who did the jobs they had in hand, with everything they had of energy, enthusiasm and hard work." Let us within the veteran family, recognizes those individuals that used their energy, their hard work and their enthusiasm to better the lives of our veterans and their family members.

Defense Authorization Bill Passes With the Next Generation Bomber Amendment - On July 23rd, the U.S. Senate voted 87-7 to approve the National Defense Authorization bill for Fiscal Year 2010. The bill authorizes \$680 billion in funding for the Department of Defense and the national security programs of the Department of Energy, including several South Dakota defense related projects. The bill also includes a 3.4 percent across-the-board pay raise for servicemen and women. The bill includes an amendment to preserve the Next Generation Bomber program, which was targeted for termination by the Obama Administration. The bill authorizes important projects at Ellsworth Air Force Base, Joe Foss Field, and Camp Rapid. The bill also authorizes critical research projects at South Dakota State University and the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology that will explore the development and use of renewable fuels for military purposes.

VA to host Veterans Stand Down in McLaughlin and Eagle Butte -The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Black Hills Health Care System will host a *Veterans Stand Down* in McLaughlin on Wednesday, August 12, from Noon – 3:00pm at the City Auditorium and in Eagle Butte on Thursday, August 13, from Noon – 3:00pm at the Cultural Center. Basic health services will be provided, including blood sugar testing and blood pressure screening. A variety of personal care items will be available to anyone wishing a hand up, and a complimentary noon meal will be served. VA Black Hills Health Care System, South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) will be available to hear issues, answer

questions, and provide information on VA benefits, programs and health care enrollment opportunities. A special invitation is extended to veterans who have served since November 1998 and may not be aware of the benefits they are eligible for. VA Black Hills Operation Enduring Freedom/ Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) representatives will be on site to assist these veterans. Representatives from the VA Home Loan Program, Social Security Administration, South Dakota Department of Labor, South Dakota State Veterans Home, Black Hills National Cemetery, State and Local American Legion and other veteran related partners will also be in attendance to provide information and assistance to Stand Down participants. The Stand Downs are intended to serve homeless and needy veterans from the area. There is no charge for any of the services.

Veterans to Receive Full Public School Tuition and Stipend at Nation's Colleges and Universities – Today, President Obama will join VA Secretary Shinseki, Senator Webb and other administration officials to mark the implementation of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. This bill honors the countless sacrifices made by our men and women in uniform by providing them with comprehensive educational benefits. On August 1, the Department of Veterans Affairs will begin distributing tuition payments to schools participating in the program. This program, introduced in Congress by U.S. Senator Jim Webb and enacted into law last year, authorizes the most extensive educational assistance opportunity since the passage of the original GI Bill in 1944. The maximum benefit allows every eligible Veteran, service member, Reservist, and National Guard member an opportunity to receive an in-state, undergraduate education at a public institution at no cost. In addition, 1,100 Institutes of Higher Learning are participating in the Yellow Ribbon Program, giving eligible Veterans the opportunity to attend applicable private universities and colleges across America at potentially no cost as well.

On the Hill – The U.S. Senate is expected to hold a procedural vote today on the fiscal 2010 Agriculture spending bill; they will then begin debating the nomination of Judge Sonia Sotomayor to be a Supreme Court justice. At the end of the week they will adjourn for their month-long recess. The U.S. House is currently in recess until September 8. While back in the states South Dakota's congressional delegation will be traveling across the state visiting with their constituents and community leaders. Use this time to visit with them about issues relevant to the veterans of South Dakota.

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